Dhaka, Sunday, February 6, 1994

ORS: Sterling Success

Not many developments in the health sector do warrant a celebration of 25 years of their spectacular success. Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) is a rare singular invention to earn such an honour by its own right. The Bangladesh government and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) have every reason to mark the occasion in a befitting manner. Whether the celebration fortuitously coincides with the unprecedented simultaneous presence of the heads of five United Nations agencies - the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP). International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) or the occasion has been deliberately chosen for the purpose is besides the point.

What is important is that yesterday's celebration received an emphatic moral boost by their presence. That two of these five UN agencies along with World Health Organisation (WHO). Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), USAID and the Bangladesh government were recipients of awards for their contributions to the development and promotion of ORS, worldwide and in Bangladesh, made the celebration specially gratifying.

A simple solution of water, sugar and salt, ORS should necessarily be hailed as a most positive development in the medical history of the century. This recognition is due to the solution's enviable record of saving human lives and money. Over one million lives and 10 billion dollars are saved world wide annually, thanks to the effectiveness of ORS which is not a drug itself but helps develop resistance against all kinds of diarrhoeal diseases through making up for the dehydration caused by them. The fact that another three million lives can be saved through efficient distribution and use of ORS only points to the potential of this simple formula. Invention of a lifesaving drug or aid is important, no doubt, but making it cheap and available to the common people should be considered no less important. As a real breakthrough on the health front, ORS's virtue is all the more recognised on the second count as well.

By all accounts, ORS should be treated as a major contribution to medical research of this century and the centuries to come. At the same time it is a valuable gift this country has come up with for the ailing humanity. That cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases accounted for more deaths than the victims of all other diseases put together in the developing countries just before the advance of the ORS theory places this simple solution in a success category of its own. The world bodies are only too aware of its importance and they are willing to accord it the recognition it deserves. The occasion of ORS's unrivalled success in the past quarter of a century is therefore being celebrated in Washington to draw the world attention on this sterling feat at the ICDDR, B.

All this is good enough, so far as the recognition to the medical advance is concerned. But a lot more is to be done if the full benefits of this solution are to reach the millions falling victims to the diarrhoeal diseases. People must be made convinced of its unfailing effects through a consistent campaign and at the same time demonstrations should be made of its proper use to get the desired result. Educational institutions at the primary and secondary level can be put to a very effective use for the purpose, besides calling in the service of the media to back up the campaign.

The Picnickers' Pang

The composite scene of a picnickers' bus glaringly upside down, another shoved into a ditch and the third one having collided with a microbus conjured up Friday's tally of tell-tale accidents — met by recreation-seekers. Gleanings from newspaper reports indicate that the first two mishaps were on the Dhaka-Mymensingh road. One of the buses, bound for the National Park, lost control at the steering wheel nosediving into a ditch while the second one overturned near the ICTVTR of its own spin. One to hit the microbus was on the Aricha road, at Savar.

As if to sharpen the fright of road mishaps in general, on the same day an ordinary passengercarrying minibus also trundled after one of its front tyres came loose and it hit hard a wayside tree.

The picnic season this winter has thus begun on a forbidding note giving a timely warning to the excursion-hungry city-dwellers that they take adequate pre-cautions before hitting the road. The message comes home not only with the latest series of mishaps involving picnic parties, including the one in which a person fell from the bus-top the other day, but essentially because such accidents have become a recurring annual feature.

The first thing for the picnickers to mind seriously is to make the journey like they would do on any long distance route - as quiet passengers holding their jaunty mood within themselves until they have made it to the destination. What usually happens inside a transport is that high decibel noise, mixed with songs played on the audio in a deafening volume, tends to distract the attention of the drivers from where it should be focused. His concentration drifting, his judgement and reflexes may get snapped due to the loud frolicking and awkward remarks mouthed from time to time. A carefree mood is usually ineffective. All possible restraints need to be applied in our scheme of things where the person in whose hands are placed all the lives may have his own shortcomings as a driver, too. But that is where the selection of the driver in the first place ought to be fool-proof — based on a prior scrutiny of his papers by the picnic organisers. The need for ascertaining whether the driver smells or otherwise tests free of addiction is being increasingly felt by the day. Besides, the organisers can arrange to have the transport checked against brake failures, or other gross mechanical defects. There is every reason on the part of the clients to shun the attitude of taking things granted when preparing for excursions which have a way of generating a certain light-heartedness in the transport operator, or for that matter, the driver.

Three broadly preemptive measures could be taken to ensure road safety for the picnic parties. First, the transports must not be over-loaded. Second, the transport operators have to offer their services in one package inclusive of a guarantee for an efficient and mentally stable driver and a defect-free vehicle. Third, the high-way police should be on hand at some point to check over-speeding — in the very least — so that it has a sobering effect on the entire trip.

National Security: Need for Political Control

ATION'S security is an affair of state in which every body has got a role to play. Our Liberation War is the best, nearest and most recent example. It was not only the soldiers who fought, Pakistanis surrendered to the collective might of the nation.

It is often seen that the leaders of the country and society who get fully involved in a total war, tend to leave the defence planning and preparation to the generals of the armed forces.

One must not forget that the generals with due regards to their patriotism many a time have given in to the military corporate interest. Until and unless the leaders and of ficials from all sectors get involve in the planning process the political leadership can not control and lead the armed forces in times of crisis.

One must also remember that it is Roosevelt. Churchill. Stalin who led their nations in war. Montgomery, Eisenhower Rommel and Mac Aurther were there to execute the

My aim of writing this series on National Defence Planning and Resource Allocation is to raise the issue at appropriate level so that the political leadership take charge of national security and keep the nation in confidence by allowing the members of parliament to play their due role in defence planning.

The most fundamental consideration for defence planning is to perceive and identify threats to national security and of securing national survival. Defence is the acquisi-

Haiti and its exiled President

office.

coup in 1991.

Jean Bertrand Aristide to

came around to that view

when, in a recent interview

with the Miami Herald edito-

rial board, he called for mili-

tary action to dislodge the

army chief, General Raoul

Cedras, who unseated him in a

military action against Cedras

unless the United States is

willing to sponsor it. And US

President Bill Clinton is not

about to send the Marines into

atmosphere surrounding

Clinton, who manoeuvred him-

self out of fighting in the

Vietnam war and faces the

constant dilemma of when and

how he can order troops into

ton's leaning toward a

presidency built on domestic

issues, which explains his re-

luctance to become militarily

engaged in the former

Yugoslavia. His domestic issues

are many and urgent and in-

clude reforms to health care

and welfare, as well as accep-

tance of openly-homosexual

Americans into the armed

agenda seems to be confined

to scoring successes in rela-

tions with Russia and the

former states of the Soviet

Union, building on the situa-

tion he inherited of a collapsed

Soviet empire desperate for

on his campaign promise not

to force Haitian refugees back

home. After winning the 1992

election, he announced he was

keeping intact his predecessor

George Bush's policy of

L ther forecasting pro-

gramme in a bid to offset

staggering annual crop losses

due to late, insufficient and

inaccurate weather infor-

(US\$32.25 million) project

will set up the National Centre

for Medium-Range Weather

Forecasting and Development

of Agro-Meteorological Servic-

es. The programme will

establish medium-range

weather forecasting services

and promote and coordinate

research in related areas of

from the United Nations

Development Programme

(UNDP) for the training of 39

meteorology.

The 1,000 million rupee

NDIA has launched a

multi-million-rupee wea-

On Haiti, Clinton reneged

aid and other assistance.

Clinton's foreign policy

Another deterrent is Clin-

One reason is the general

But there is little chance of

Aristide himself finally

NLY an invasion is like-

ly to bring about the re-

turn of democracy to

by Brig. Anwarul Azeem Mallik, ndc, psc, (Retd)

The most fundamental consideration for defence planning is to perceive and identify threats to national security and of securing national survival. Defence is the acquisition of a plan fitted to the predictable needs of the future and the means of meeting them.

tion of a plan fitted to the predictable needs of the future and the means of meeting them. It is clear that all states whether liberal democratic. totalitarian, autocratic, military or authoritarian have such plans in relation to defence for a variety of reasons. Countries may differ in their historical perspective in ideological orientation, in military tradition and strength, but basically share a common methodology and procedures for defence planning.

Defence policy takes shape through formulation of goals by statesmen and systematic pursuit of expansive strategies to achieve these goals by military and civilian bureaucrats. The development of such policies involves an interactive process of an elaborate character which requires a mechanism to reconcile the set goals with the execution of policy as measured in allocated resources. Defence planners need to decide what kind of defence capabilities are likely to arise and which are less likely to do so in the context of furthering national security both for the present and in the uncertain . future. They need to identify secular trends in economic affairs and the general direction in which military technology is moving. In short, defence planners must assess the changes underway in the world

in which risk, danger and vio-

lence are rampant. Therefore, the strong point for any defence planner is his ability to understand the strategic envi-

To be relevant and useful to the defence planners, strategic assessment must be balanced. They must be based on diplomatic political, economic, industrial and security and intelligence assessments which are seen to be relevant to both the probabilities and to the potentially critical contingencies of the foreseeable future. They must include both the dimensions of change and continuity for growth and for stagnation. Some trends will appear more certain than others, in other areas it will be of gross uncertainties of the situation, which need to be defined or described to identify certain

The narrow domain of the military does not give military leaders adequate opportunity to understand strategic environment. A broad spectrum of qualified persons should get involved to articulate state's strategic policy.

For defence planning we may identify five inseparable

To acquire and sustain the

ability to perform exact and predictable commitments. To provide a basis for an

expanded capability in which the lead times are reduced as much as possible so that cer-

tain equipment, weapon systems, skills and facilities are arranged as and when required

To achieve and sustain a substantial independent operational capability.

To acquire an ability to demonstrate a war fighting competence in the face of a tangible threat exercising purposeful approach in the use of military force.

To encourage the growth of defence industry capable of supplying some of the equipment required for military operations and retaining the capacity to absorb and operate high technical equipment.

A contingency planning traditionally provided a guide to what capabilities could be and should be acquired to meet certain kinds of threat. Some defence planners define this as core or potential force which lies in the heart of all military capabilities until military effectiveness reaches an optimum point. Yet in any planned expansion of military capability, strategic assessments are of central and critical importance i. e. indicators are perceived, well in advance of an explicit threat, which can prove the basis for a buildup.

Defence planners realise that such expansion and change can be achieved gradually. The degree of sophistication required in planning an expansion of capability is a direct function of the guidance available to defence planning staffs. This also relates to the general allocation of resources controlled by political leadership which the governments are prepared to release for defence purposes. The process of defence planning, therefore, requires a guidance mechanism controlled by political leadership to effect changes to occur within a definite sequence and a given time scale.

This, in most of the countries,

varies from 5 to 10 years ac-

cording to complexities to re-

spective defence programme. Defence programme centres on major equipment decisions, with lengthy lead times and the future manpower policies. They also require financial support within a given defence budget which depends on the concept of future planning, Planning is the essence of good defence policy. Bad planning is almost as counter productive as no planning at all. The failure to plan ahead within the parameters provided by intelligence experts makes any sensible expansion of defence capability almost an impossibility. However, even good intelligence does not necessarily lead to good planning. One should not be con-

fused with the other. Long term planning is a difficult art and is a long drawn out process. Long term planning should provide an analytical basis for future defence structures so as to détermine the balance between levels and types of equipment manpower, infrastructures, training and operational activity. In short, force expansion must be seen in the context of existing force as well as strategic environment. Such expansion must obviously be based on existing capability where already a substantial environment exists.

National defence is too sensitive an issue to be left to the generals alone. Military component is a small fraction in the overall national security. Economic strength, industrial or and technological capability. foreign policy options and some other factors are of equal importance, if not more.

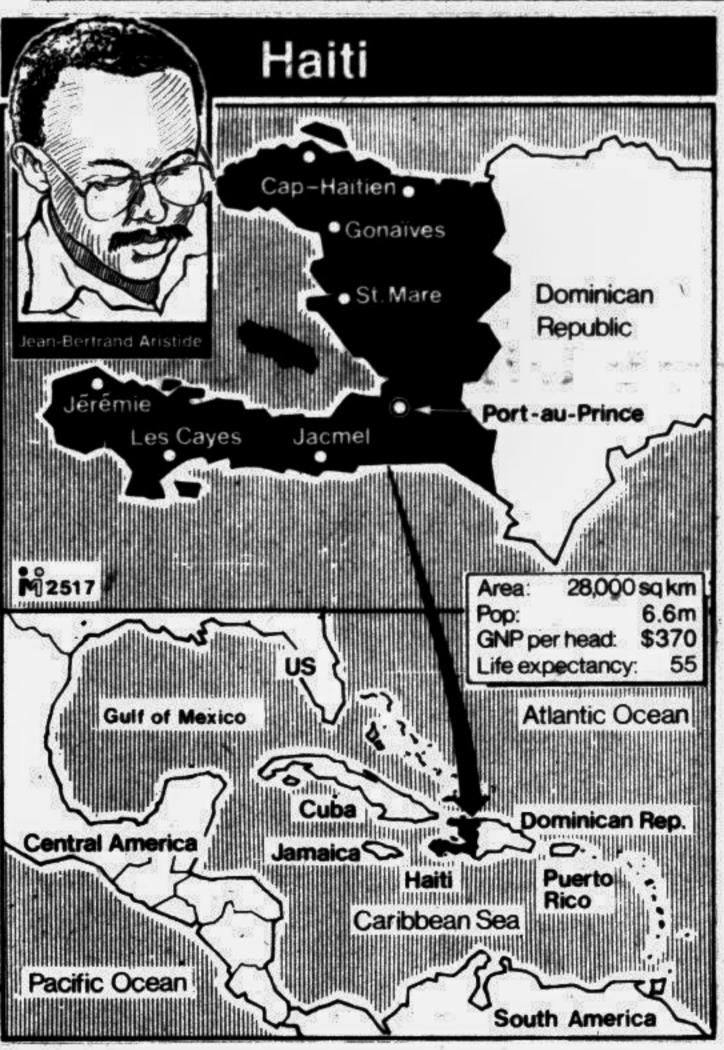
Therefore it is not possible for military organisations or institutions alone to evaluate and formulate a long term defence policy. For macro planning of national security in a democratic country where government can change any time national consensus is essential on key national issues. Defence is one such issue were government and opposition must have basically identical view so that continuity of long term programme is not disturbed. Can the nation expect that our leaders will keep national security above party

The writer is a retired Brigadier who held top-level senior positions in the Army, including those of Director, Military Intelligence and Director, Military Training. He is currently the Executive Director of a development research organisation.

No Sign of a 'Communion' of Unity over Haiti

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

Exiled Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide says United States military action is needed for him to meet his 7 February target for returning to lead his country. With President Bill Clinton's mind on other matters Washington is unlikely to oblige.



blockading Haiti to prevent any flood of refugees coming to

Indian scientists in Western

countries. Both, the World

Meteorological Organisation in

Geneva and the European

Centre for Medium-Range

Weather Forecasts have offered

gramme, which will cost

US\$539,000, will assist other

developing countries as well. A

significant aspect of the UN

assistance is that it will help

rural female workers. It is es-

timated that some 50 per cent

of women labourers in villages

are engaged as agricultural

cause of adverse weather con-

ditions have plagued the coun-

Mounting crop losses be-

UNDP officials say the pro-

organise a conference involving both Aristide and Cedras. which set out details for Last year Clinton's aides did Cedras' resignation and for the stage to be set for the late 1993 return of Aristide, ousted nine months after becoming country's first freelyelected president.

A key provision was for the despatch of US military personnel to "retrain" Haitian soldiers. When the ship carrying the American soldiers tried to dock at Port-au-Prince, they were confronted by a rag-tag band of armed civilians, obviously sponsored by the Haitian military. Clinton promptly recalled the ship, complaining that Cedras had failed to live up to his side of the bargain to provide unimpeded access to the country. Economic sanctions were

slapped on Haiti, together with a US ban against visits by those connected with the coup and the freezing of bank accounts. The sanctions are still in place but have done nothing to oust Cedras, who ignored the latest deadline of mid-January to

Current US talk is not of invasion but of organising a multinational force to further tighten sanctions, even though there have been several reports that poor Haitians are the ones squeezed by the embargo.

Aristide's call for military action actually sparked a rebuff from the Clinton administration, which described it as not helpful."

Aristide also displeased the US administration by refusing to attend a conference summoned by the then interim Prime Minister Robet Malval.

timely weather information

relayed quickly to farmers is

of medium-range weather

forecasts. This will be properly

addressed with the new pro-

gramme. In fact, India's mete-

orological department has

been issuing short-range snap-

shot of weather information 24

hours in advance with outlook

for the next 48 hours and

long-range weather forecasts

mand for forecasts of weather

for ten days in advance. This is

But there is still a real de-

for the monsoon season.

One problem is the absence

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

important.

System will help minimise if not prevent crop losses

Washington saw his refusal as obstructionist but Aristide's position was that as the dulyelected leader of his country. it is he who must determine how its future is settled. Malval has since resigned.

Yet to calm American jitters. Aristide convened his own conference in Miami in mid-January. Cedras and his allies refused to attend but a majority of Haitian lawmakers came, as did Clinton's Haitian specialists. Aristide made a stirring ap-

peal to his compatriots to join in a "communion" of unity for the return of democracy and an end to the killings. There is no reason to believe that the conference changed anything or that Aristide will realise his hope for a return to Haiti on 7 February, the third anniversary of his inauguration.

But what also emerged from the conference is a growing level of dissatisfaction among some in the US Congress with Clinton's handling of the Haiti issue. The strongest criticism comes from the Congressional Black Caucus.

Major Owens, who keeps an eye on Haiti for the Caucus, called for "protective" military action against Cedras. Other black lawmakers took similar positions. Some made thinlyveiled charges of racism against Clinton over his handling of this matter of a black nation.

So unless Clinton moves quickly, he may face a concerted effort by African-Americans to force his hand,

similar to the move which forced then President Ronald Reagan to agree to economic sanctions against South Africa.

The Congressional Black Caucus will play a key role in any such development because, numbering around 40, it is a formidable voting bloc and can defeat Clinton's legislative ini-

So far the Caucus has been supportive of this first Democratic President since Jimmy Carter in the late-1970s. But an increasing number are starting to paint the Haitian issue in racial tones, contrasting the policy of forcing Haitian refugees - "the black boat people" - away from American shores, while allowing thousands of Cubans free admission.

Clinton would have to respond. He is unlikely to take unilateral action, but might, if pushed hard enough, seek to forge an international agree-

ment to oust Cedras. The problem is that there are so many more pressing matters - including Bosnia and the former Soviet states that it is not known how ready the major powers will be to invade tiny Haiti.

Meanwhile, although publicly Clinton still embraces Aristide as Haiti's elected leader. US officials have let it be known that they would be happy to distance themselves from Aristide.

suggested the possibility of an accommodation with those who are now in power in Portau-Prince, a suggestion rejected by Aristide.
What all this indicates is

Administration officials have

that there is still far to go before Clinton and his officials will consider military action against Cedras.

The stalemate continues. - GEMINI NEWS MOHAMED HAMALUDIN is managing editor of the Maimi

India Improves Weather Forecasting Services

research in this vital area.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting, established in 1975, has developed climatic forecasts of up to seven to eight days in the hemisphere and up to three days in the tropics.

what India lacks, a luxury avail-

able to Western weather scien-

In 1985, the United States National Meteorological Centre started producing three-to five-day weather forecasts and average weather conditions six to ten days in advance. Now Canada, Japan and Australia are using global weather models for their operational forecasts.

Indian meteorological scientists have been advancing

Likewise, a satellite-based telecommunication network will be set up to issue weather warnings which will be promptly carried by television and radio. Already, a Cray computer. XMP-216 has been installed in the Indian Meteorological Department in New Delhi.

UNDP officials say they will extend support in this area to introduce similar advisory systems by providing weather forecasts to developing countries in the region through technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

In fact, India is already providing weather forecasts and warnings to Bangladesh, Burma and Mauritius.

- Depthnews Special

workers. And some 37 per The Indian government is receiving technical assistance cent of them are cultivators.

Attesting officers needed

Sir, we are conventionally perplexed whenever we are asked to get our educational documents attested by a first class gazetted officer. Whether our papers are genuine or not do not matter, but the interrogation is that the officers do not get interest in allowing us inside their chambers. They raise excuses such as that they are very much diligent in their duties authorized by the government, and consequently, being angry with them, many are allegedly compelled to make false stamps (not unlikely) designed on several such officers or institutional

heads! One thing is to be said. however against my will, that our government has not conferred them with such obligation when they were nominated in jobs; but they have been given all sorts of liberty to do everything in their offices, very often even wasting hours after hours in unimportant pursuits. Even doctors at Govt. hospitals do not pay proper attention to the patients; teachers of Govt colleges/schools are not magnanimous in their sacred performances. A good number of students

have reportedly been punished by different administrative branches due to their falsely certified transcripts; and I like

to blame the above mentioned officers for this unwanted So, I would suggest our

try for years. But scientists be-

lieve if weather advisories

reach farmers in time, it may

lead to major reduction in

costs and increase in produc-

tion. For example, if there is a

likelihood of rain in a couple of

days, and the standing crop is

not likely to suffer, farmers

can be advised to defer irriga-

going to be heavy rainfall at a

time when the crop is almost

ready, and advisory is given on

time, then pre-harvesting will

help in minimising losses.

This is where accurate and

Another example: If there is

tion, thus saving input costs.

democratic government to appoint some officers whose unique responsibility should be to attest the documents, and thus, a fairplay situation would prevail in the course of job attainability.

M Habibur Rahman Shaheed Suhrawardy Hall, Rajshahi Varsity

BBC

Sir, How ironic, Only recently we read in the papers that just 10% of the people in Britain believe their journalists. And, in this country we

take BBC as certain truth! Any important event occurring anywhere and we go rushing to tune into BBC to hear and see what they have to say and, gullible and brainwashed that we are, we take it all in as authentic.

Do we need to fall willing victim to the new disinformation order under which Aideed is one day a "warlord" and the next day "a faction leader" (depending on how the west wants us to see him); an Egyptian bomber is a Muslim terrorist but an Ulter bomber is never a Christian terrorist? A single nuclear test by China raises wrath all around. But 200 secret nuclear tests by USA is only a subject of passing

mention, That is, unfortunately, BBC and we are now fed 10 hour everyday with these M Haq

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Islamic Common Market

Sir, Is in a mockery as you pose to have an Islamic common market? I am asking this question because, there are people in all the countries like Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Malaysia who are giving birth to some highsounding greenglass spectacular economic development in words and paperworks to please their

'mentors' in the west, specially America, to have some medals and prizes (also capital to run so called NGOs), at the cost of real economic dev. of their respective countries.

Whatever one intends to do, may well do. But mind it that the American and European selfstyled 'keepers' of democracy and protectors' of sovereignty of others will never allow you to develop an "Islamic bomb". Doesn't one see things vis-a-vis Libya, Iraq. Bosnia Herzegovina, Burma? So how much practical can you be with the idea of "Isla mic common market" vis-a-vis the Western 'mentors?

M Bashir

Narsingdi